

Gill Gatfield

*Babel* 2009

toughened clear float glass, 12 concrete blocks  
1840H x 390W x 390mmD



Taking its title from the ancient myth of the Tower of Babel and the dispersion of languages, Gill Gatfield's sculpture is profound in its stark simplicity. She cleverly combines imagery related to language (text) with that of architecture, making striking use of the contrasting characteristics of the modernist building materials.

The capital letter 'I' shaped in glass, suggests an existential statement of the fragile nature of our 'being' – translucent and reflective, solid yet transparent. The base of the glass sheet is held tentatively in tension between two towers of stacked concrete blocks. A void beneath the glass is visible only in profile; when all elements of this sculptural composition compress into an arrangement of pure vertical lines.

Towers tend to be erected as symbols of power, landmarks or as watchtowers. As a power structure, a tower asserts itself visually by creating a vertical "I" statement against the horizontal surface of its base; an exclamation mark against the horizon. As a landmark, a tower provides us with bearings: it exclaims "Here I am" and "There you are". Gatfield has used these connotations to invade the viewers' subconscious – engagement is unavoidable. In *Babel*, the 'Ever-watching, All-seeing eye' perched on the summit of the concrete watchtower, is "I". Puns abound.

Reminiscent of the multiplication of modules inherent in Brancusi's *Endless Columns* and the elegant modernism of a Mies Van Der Rohe skyscraper, Gatfield has created a maquette for a universal post modernist art piece that 'speaks' to us through its shapes, forms and materials: both literally as well as symbolically.

Ursula Cranmer

Art Writer

October 2009